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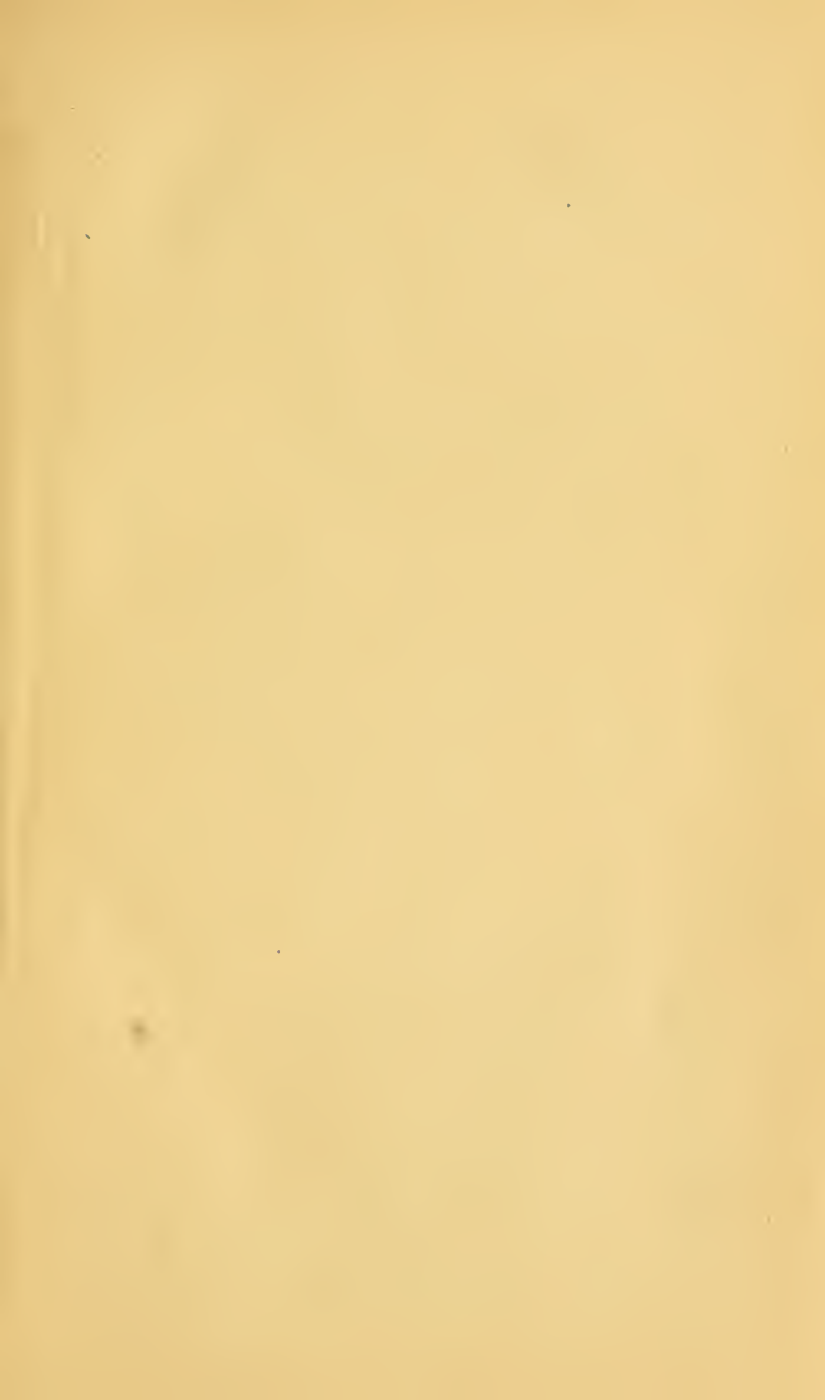
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THE

Dismal Swamp

—AND—

LAKE DRUMMOND.

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

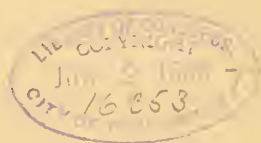


VIVID PORTRAYAL OF AMUSING SCENES.

—(BY)—

ROBT. ARNOLD,

SUFFOLK, VA.



1888.

EVENING TELEGRAM PRINT

NORFOLK, VA.

§ The reader's attention is directed to the omission of the following two lines from the bottom of page 11. They should be read in connection with that page to make an intelligent sentence :

Woodward and my father soon got their traps aboard then lifting me in, all was ready. The drivers ad-

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INTRODUCTION.



This little volume is launched upon the sea of public favor. If it should stem the tide of criticism and reach a haven, my object in the writing of it will be accomplished. Being partially blind and physically unable to labor, I have adopted this as a means by which I might gain an honest assistance, a double object presented itself:

First, that I might give to its readers some idea of the Dismal Swamp and Lake Drummond, as they were and as they now are.

Second, that I may from the sale of my book receive an amount that will place me beyond penury. The work will contain some interesting incidents, and in many instances, will give the real names of persons now living who will be acquainted with the subject of which I write. Having said this much introductory of my book I will now proceed with my task.

When I determined to indite the lines which compose this volume, I had, as has been stated, a double purpose in view. I thought I could not employ a portion of my leisure hours more profitably, certainly not more pleasantly, than by recounting some of the scenes, incidents and associations, which carries my mind back to the days of "Auld Lang Syne". What more natural then than that my thoughts should revert to the friend of my early manhood—one who by the uprightness of his character, geniality of his disposition, the chivalric impulses of his nature, deserves, as it is my greatest pleasure to accord, the dedication of this little volume; and I have said all when I mention the name of my esteemed friend Robert Riddick, Esq., of Suffolk, Va.

THE AUTHOR.

Suffolk, Va., January 1, 1888.

CHAPTER I.

DESCRIPTION AND SITUATION OF THE SWAMP— WASHINGTON THE OWNER.

The Dismal Swamp, of which but little is known, is a large body of dense woods, being situated and laying in Nansemond county, Virginia, and the County of Gates, in North Carolina. It contains, by survey, about 100,000 acres. I have been told by H. E. Smith, Esq., our county treasurer, that 45,000 acres were listed in the County of Nansemond. It is thickly set with Juniper, Cyrpress and other timber, which makes it very valuable. It came into the possession of General George Washington, and after the Revolutionary War a company known as the Dismal Swamp Land Company was formed and arrangements made to manufacture the timber; hands were put in the Swamp and it was regularly opened. A large quantity of timber was manufactured, and Washington found it necessary to find some outlet for it, which could only be done by a canal or ditch. A suitable place was soon found, and Washington commenced in person to survey the route, known as the Washington Ditch. He commenced at the eastern boundry of the farm, known as "Soldier's Hope," which belonged to Col. Josiah Riddick, on the northwest of the Lake, and running west to what is called the Reed farm, on the Edenton road, about seven miles from Suffolk. A large quantity of Juniper timber was brought through this ditch, which was hauled to the Nansemond river for shipment. We were told by one of the agents of the company, W. S. Riddick, Esq., that at one time all the business of

the company was transacted at the Reed farm; that being the point at which the Ditch ended. This mode of getting the lumber to market was found to be too slow and tedious, and a more direct way was sought. How long the Washington Ditch was used for the bringing out of the timber manufactured, we have never heard. That will make no difference, for after the Jericho Canal was cut, the Ditch was abandoned, and a direct communication opened to the Nansemond river, by the way of Shingle Creek. Millions of feet of timber was shipped annually. The share-holders at that time were few in number, and their profits were very large. The company consisted of a President, Agent and Inspector; he living at or near Suffolk, and had charge of the work in the Swamp. He employed the hands, furnished all the supplies, sold the lumber, received all monies, and paid all bills. He was, in fact, the principal officer of the company. At a stated period, annually, a meeting would be held for a general settlement of the year's accounts. The President would preside, and as there were no Banks at that time in which to deposit money the Agent would have a very large amount to turn over to the stockholders. That place is no longer of much value to its owners, as it is a source of but little revenue. The shares have been divided and sub-divided until some of its holders get barely enough to pay the postage on a letter. Ex-Senator Wm. Mahone is probably the largest share-holder. The Swamp has been leased to Jno. L. Roper, Esq., of Norfolk, for several years, during which he has had employed a large number of hands, consequently most of the valuable timber has been cut off. When this Swamp was first opened it became a harbor and

safe refuge for runaway slaves, and when one reached that dense place, unless he was betrayed, it would be a matter of impossibility to catch him. Long before the war you could not take up a newspaper published in this part of the State but what you would see several cuts of a negro absconding with a stick on his shoulder and a pack on one end of it, with the following advertisement:

"Notice! \$500 Reward! Ran away from the subscriber, on the night of June 18th, my negro man, Simon. He had on when last seen, a pair of light pants with a black patch on the seat of the same. He is slue-footed, knock-kneed and bends over a little when walking. He may be making his way to the Dismal Swamp. I will pay the above reward for his apprehension, or his lodgment in some jail, so that I can get him again.

JOE JONES."

I knew of an instance, just before the late war, where a gentleman by the name of Aug. Hilley, of Bertie county, N. C., had a slave to runaway, who was known to be a desperate character. He knew that he had gone to the Dismal Swamp, and to get him, his master offered a reward of \$1,000 for his apprehension, dead or alive. The person who caught him is still living. I saw the negro when he was brought to Suffolk and lodged in jail. He had been shot at several times, but was little hurt. He had on a coat that was impervious to shot; it being thickly wadded with turkey feathers. Small shot were the only kind used to shoot runaway slaves, and it was very seldom the case that any ever penetrated far enough to injure. I know three persons now living who were runaway slave catchers, but the late war stripped them of their occupation. They were courageous and men of nerve.

CHAPTER II.

TO GROW UP AGAIN IN A JUNGLE.

But little work is now done in the Dismal Swamp, and it will again soon become a howling wilderness, a hiding place for the bears, wild-cats, snakes and everything hideous. The bam-boo and rattan will rule supreme, and like the banyan tree, will form an impenetrable jungle. But a few years will be required for its accomplishment, and without an ax you could not move a foot.

G. P. R. James, the British Consul, who was stationed at Norfolk when he wrote his novel, entitled, "The Old Dominion," and which was a history of "Nat Turner's War," (as it is called) in Southampton county, states that a young mother, with her infant, fled to the Dismal Swamp for safety. Mr. James must have drawn heavily on his imagination for a figure, to make the situation more horrible. I do not think any mother, with an infant, would flee to such a wild and desolate place as the Dismal Swamp, but on the contrary would keep far away.

I could relate many interesting stories that I have heard about the Swamp, but as I am writing from my own observation, will discard all such from my task. It is true that some very mysterious things have been seen at various times. I will, digressing a little from my story, relate one circumstance that was told me by a gentleman who lived in Suffolk and was stopping at Lake Drummond hotel, situated near the Lake shore, and which was visited at that time by many persons from New York and other places. This gentleman remarked to me, that he was standing near the Lake one morning and happening to look across

the Lake, to his great astonishment, saw come out of the woods at a point so thick with reeds, bam-boo and rattan, that you could not get three feet from the shore, a beautiful, finely dressed lady; she walked out on a log about twenty feet into the Lake, with a fishing pole in her hand. I saw her bait her hook and throw it out into the Lake. He said he could also tell the color of the ribbon on her bonnet. He watched the same place every day for several days, and at the same hour each day the lady appeared as before. I told my friend that he must have been laboring under an optical delusion at the time, as the Lake was five miles wide at that place, and that it was impossible for one to distinguish objects at so great a distance with the naked eye. He replied that every part of the story was true.

On another occasion, a gentleman, now living in Suffolk, told me that he was out hunting in the Swamp, and chancing to look to the front saw snakes coming from every direction, and quite near him he saw a lump of them that looked to be as large as a barrel. He supposed that there must have been as many as five hundred, all so interwoven that they looked like a ball of stakes. He said he was too close on them to shoot so stepping back he fired both barrels of his gun at the bunch. An untangling at once commenced, and he said, "consarned if he ever saw so many snakes before." Upon going to the place where he had shot he found 150 snakes dead, and as many more wounded. He carried some of the largest of the dead and procured a ten-foot rod, and on measuring found one that measured twenty-three feet. I have related this snake story several times, but was always

very particular to know that the gentleman who told me was at some other place.

CHAPTER III.

HEALTHFULNESS AT THE SWAMP.

Although the Dismal Swamp is so uninviting, it is one of the healthiest places in the United States. Death from disease has never been known in that place, and it is impossible to tell to what age one would attain if they would take up their abode in it. I have been told that instances were known where persons were found who were so old that they had moss growing on their backs, and who could give no idea of their age. I once knew a family by the name of Draper, who lived in the Swamp, near the edge of the Lake. What became of them, I do not know; the spot where their house stood, now forms a part of the Lake. The constant washing of the western shore causes rapid encroachments, and it is only a question of time when it will reach the high lands. It is in the Dismal Swamp that Lake Drummond was discovered, by whom I do not know, but is said to have been found by a man named Drummond, whose name it bears; that will make no difference with me, the question is, how came it there? Was it a freak of nature or was it caused by warring of the elements, is a question for the consideration of those who visit it. That it was the effect of fire caused by lightning setting fire to the turf, or some dead tree, there can be no doubt. At what time in the Christian Era this eventful period was, it is not, nor never will be known. Suffice it to say, that it was found and is the wonder and admiration of all that have ever visited it. It is a broad sheet o

water, covering an area of five by seven miles, and is surrounded by a dense growth of woods, so thick that you cannot see the Lake until you are within a few feet of it. Many visitors have visited it, all of whom were struck with astonishment at the sight. It is ten miles southeast of Suffolk: I will now relate some of the adventures of my first trip. It was on a bright morning, early in the month of May, 1832, that my father and I started for "Lake Drummond," or the Lake of the "Dismal Swamp," as some call it; and as all preparations had been made the night before, there was nothing to prevent us from making an early start. The idea of my going to the Lake, had driven sleep from my eyes, and I was ready to start at any time; but it was not until the grey dawn of day that my father began to stir. He was soon ready, and providing himself with fishing poles, bait, lunch and such other articles as were necessary for a two or three days fishing excursion, then taking our leave of my mother and the other members of the family, we were off. The Portsmouth and Roanoke Railroad—now the Seaboard and Roanoke Railroad—was at that time graded as far as Suffolk. We followed the line of it as far as a place known as Peter Jones, where we left it and passed through "Bull Field," to the company's mill, which is but a short distance from the basin of the Canal, at which place we were to take a skiff for the Lake. On arriving at the basin we found Mr. James Woodward, grand-father of Hersey Woodward, Esq., of Suffolk, Va. He was Inspector of lumber for the "Dismal Swamp Land Company," and was on his way to the Lake. The drivers of the skiff, Tony Nelson and Jim Brown, were ready, and it being now about sun-rise, Mr.

justed their poles and away we went, all being a novelty to me, who had never before been in a boat on water. Everything appeared very strange, being but a very small boy as I was. Nothing happened to impede our progress, and in about five hours from the time of starting we arrived at the Lake. Then it was that our young soul began to thrill with joy, for we were at the Lake and would soon launch on its broad bosom. The gates of the Lock were opened and the skiff shoved in, then the first gate being closed behind us another gate opened. The water rushed in and soon our boat was on a level with the Lake. The drivers then took up the oars and were ready to cross to Jack's Landing, which was on the opposite side of the Lake. It being very rough at the time some tears were expressed, but Mr. Woodward, who was well acquainted with the situation, said that he did not apprehend any danger, and the skiff was put in motion. As I said before, it was very rough, and when we had gotten about half-way across it became more so; the waves began to break over the skiff and all thought that it would fill. Fortunately, too large wooden shovels or scoops were found in the skiff, and with them Mr. Woodward and my father kept her free. "Tony" and "Jim," in the meantime, plying their oars manfully. We soon arrived at "Jack's Landing," and disembarking proceeded to Jack's camp, which was but a short distance away, and known to every person who had ever visited the Lake. On our arrival the pious Mr. Woodward offered up to the Great Ruler of wind and water a prayer for our safe deliverance from a watery grave. As we had not partaken of any nourishment since early morning, it was proposed that we should eat something, which

was readily agreed to, and in a short time we had gotten through that part of our work, whereupon my father said he would try his luck fishing. So taking a small boat, which he found at "Jack's Landing," placing me in it and then getting in himself he started for some good place to commence. He fished awhile at the "Forked Gum" without any success; moved to the "Stooping Pine," with a like result. He began to think that it was the wrong moon, and leaving that place he paddled for the "Three Cypresses," where he caught some very fine fish. It was now getting late in the afternoon and as he expected to make an early start the next morning, he thought it best to return to the camp, heading his boat in that direction he soon reached the landing; having but a short distance to walk we were not long in reaching it. Mr. Woodward had gone out to inspect some lumber and it was getting time for his return. We did not have long to wait, he soon came in, and looking at my father's "Fish Gourd," remarked, "Neddie you have had fine sport; where did you catch so many such large Frenchmen?", "Friend Jimmy," my father replied, "when I started, my first experiment was at the "Forked Gum," I did not get a nibble. I left it and stopped at the "Stooping Pine" with the same success. I began to think that I was fishing on the wrong moon." "Oh! Neddie," rejoined Mr. Woodward, "there is nothing in the phases of the moon, you are not a good fisherman. I can take you to the "Forked Gum" and "Stooping Pine" and astonish you. After leaving the "Stooping Pine," continued my father, I made for the "Three Cypresses," and it was there that I caught these fine perch." "Neddie," said Mr.

Woodard, "you are not such a bad fisherman after all; your success would do credit to the best." My father proposed to Mr. W. that we should have some of the fish cleaned and cooked for supper; the necessary order being given, in a short time a sufficient number were ready for the pan. A hot fire was made of juniper logs and the frying of fish commenced. In a short time we were told to get our shingle ready, that being the only kind of plate used in the "Dismal Swamp," and it is a well-known fact that fish eats sweeter off a shingle than any plate on which it can be placed. The fish were very fine and greatly enjoyed by all.

Supper being disposed of, a general conversation was indulged in about the Lake and Swamp, but no one present could tell anything satisfactory about the origin of the Lake; one idea was announced and then another, throwing but little light upon the subject. "Tony" and "Jim," the drivers of the skiff, were sitting near the embers nodding, when Mr. Woodward, to have a little fun, said: "Tony, what is your opinion of the origin of the Lake?"

CHAPTER IV.

ORIGIN OF THE LAKE DISCUSSED.

Old uncle "Tony" made a rake in the embers with his pipe and "yas sar, my 'pinion 'bout dat place, boss, is dat it was dug out." Here uncle Jim broke in, "What de matter wid you, Tony; how many niggers do you 'spose 'twould take tu dig a hole big nuff to hole all dat water?" "Dats a fac, Jim," cried uncle Tony, "I forgot 'bout de water."

"Well, Jim," queried Mr. Woodward, "how do

you account for it?" "Marse James," uncle Jim sagely replied, "it 'pears to me dat somebody got dat place dug away, de dirt and de water washed it down."

"Jim," exclaimed uncle Tony, "you am de biggest fool dat I ebber seed; how's any body gwine git under de groun' to dig; whar will dey put de dirt, and whar will de water cum fum tu wash it down?" Yah, yah, yah; go 'way nigger, I 'spec' you bin mole huntin'." "Dat am a fac', Tony, I didn't tink 'bout dat," said uncle Jim, with an apologetic and crestfallen air. Here Tony gave his pipe another rake in the embers, took a few puffs and fell off his log fast asleep.

It was now getting late, and preparations were being made to put me to bed, which was done by placing some hay on the floor of the camp and spreading some bed clothing, which we had brought along, the bed was soon ready, and I was snugly placed upon it, although I could not go to sleep, knowing that we were to go out early in the morning to see the sun rise on the Lake. I was called at the first dawn of day and told to get up; we soon had eaten our breakfast and everything made ready to leave for the Lake. We soon reached the landing, finding our boat ready. My father placed me in, then getting in himself, took up his paddle and shoved off for a position in the Lake where we might see the great Orb of Day bathe his face in the cloudy water of "Lake Drummond." We did not have long to wait. By the glow of light that began to show just under the eastern horizon, we were satisfied that our anticipations would soon be realized.

The morning was misty, just enough so as to hide the dense woods, which stood on the eastern

shore of the Lake, and at the same time served as a back-ground to the grand display of nature, and make it appear as if the sun actually came up out of the water as it were. The mist in front was dispelled and the rays of the sun playing on the rippling water would cause you to think that it was one vast cluster of diamonds. The sight was grand beyond my power to describe it, and I never expect to behold such a scene again. Everything was lovely, on that May morning—the balmy breeze, the air was filled with perfume of the wild flowers, which grew around the Lake; birds carolled forth sweet music as they flitted from limb to limb; squirrels could be seen and heard chattering among the trees. The shore of the Lake was spread with a velvety green, and you would think that nature had done her best to make that morning lovely. Meditating on the beauty and grandeur that surrounded us on the broad bosom of the Lake, suddenly we were awakened from our reverie by the hoarse growl and lapping of the bears, and horrid cries of the wild cats, which would cause the blood to curdle in the veins. Thus with the sweet, some sour always will be found. Occasionally, at the Lake, a noble stag will emerge from the trees, showing a stately head of horns, approach to the water and survey the prospect, then plunge in the Lake to swim to the other shore. He settles very low, and if you did not know you would take it for a floating bush. They are frequently caught when attempting to cross the Lake. Having reached a good place for fishing, my father stopped at the place known as the “Apple Trees,” where he caught some very pretty fish. His bait getting scarce, he moved around the Lake to “Draper’s Landing.” Running the bow of the canoe upon the wharf log,

which was nearly on a level with the water, left her without tying, to look for some angle worms. It being rough on the Lake at the time, the rolling of the waves caused the boat to work off, and before he could return, she had drifted well out on the broad waters of the Lake. We were too small to realize our situation; not knowing how to paddle, we were left to the mercy of the waves. On the return of my father, seeing the great peril I was in, required but a single thought for him to know what to do. Being a good swimmer he boldly plunged into the water, reached the boat and swam towing it to the shore. Had he not have returned in time, our fate could not have been told. We would have been capsized in the Lake and drowned, or have drifted ashore to be devoured by bears and other wild animals, or stung to death by the venomous reptiles, that hung in clusters on trees around the shores of the Lake. This accident put an end to fishing for that day. My father was wet, and not having a change of clothing with him, proceeded to the camp, so that he could dry. We soon arrived at Jack's Landing, and on reaching the camp, found Mr. Woodward, who remarked, "What is the matter, Neddie, did a big fish pull you overboard?" He saw that my father was wet, and ordered a fire to be made, so that he could dry his clothes. A hot fire was soon made of Juniper logs, and he was not long in drying.

Feeling no inconvenience from his ablution, and drinking a cup of hot coffee, he related the circumstances as detailed above. "Well, Neddie," said Mr. W., "you should at once return thanks to the Giver of all Good for this miraculous escape." The pious Mr. Woodward joined with him. It was now

Nearly dark, and preparations were made to have supper. When at the Lake it is expected that you will catch fish enough upon which to subsist, and my father being a good hand at angling, always had a good supply, and no one on the trip wanted for fish. The supper, which consisted of fish, bread and hot coffee, was soon ready. About this time Tony and Jim, who had been loading their skiff at the landing, returned to the camp, and taking their seats at the ends of some Juniper logs, were soon fast asleep. We ate our supper and were then ready for any kind of story that was told.

CHAPTER V.

THE VISIT OF THOS. MOORE, AS RELATED BY TONY.

As uncle Tony was perhaps the oldest person and knew more about the Lake than any person then engaged at it, he was awakened, and Mr. Woodward said, "uncle Tony, I want you to tell us about the man whom you said you brought to the Lake in 1821." "Who tole you 'bout dat, boss?" inquired uncle Tony, with an air of conscious pride. "It will make no difference, go on and tell us," returned Mr. Woodward. Tony scratched his head, then putting some tobacco in his pipe, took out his flint and steel, (matches not being known in the swamp at that day) soon had fire enough to light his pipe. Drawing on it enough to get his "nigger head" tobacco to burn—fixing himself on the end of his log and commenced: "Boss, I shall nebber forgit dat time; one mornin' as I war gittin' my skif reddy to go to de Lake, a mity nice lookin' man cum up to me an' sed Buck, ar you de man dat will carry me to de Lake ob de Dismal Swamp, for

which I will pay you one pound? De gentman talked so putty dat I tole him to git in my skif an' I woud carry him to de Lake. I notice dat he kep writin' all de way. When I got to de horse camps I stopped to git somfin to eat. He cum outen de skif an' ax me what I stop for. I tole him I stop to eat some meat an' bread. He ax me if I woud have a drink. I tuk off my hat an' tole him dat I woud be much obleged to him for it. He foched a silber jug, wid a silber cup for a stopper, an' sed, my man, dis is Irish whiskey, brung it all de way from home. He tole me dat his name was Thomas Moore, and dat he cum fom 'way ober yonder; I dun forgot de name ob de place, an' was gwine to de Lake to writr 'bout a spirit dat is seed dar paddlin' a kunnue. De har gin tu rise on my hed, an' I ax him ef dat wus a fac'. He sed dat he wus tole so in Norfolk. It was gin out dar dat a mitey putty gal had loss her swethart, an' had dun gone crazy, an' had gone to de Lake ob de Dismal Swamp an' drown herself, an' dat she ken be seen ebery night by de lite ob some sort ob fli." "I tell you, boss," continued the old man, "when he tole me 'bout dat gal paddlin' dat bote on de Lake at nite, I didn' want to go any further wid him, but he tole me dar woud be no danger. I could not see hur, so I carrid him on to de Lake. He rit like de gal had run away an' had been drowned rite here. I shal nebber forgit dat gentman. I fotch him back an' he gin me de poun', which war five dollars, an' he lef for Norfolk, bein' mitey glad dat I had carrid him to de Lake."

"Tony, did he tell you anything about his trip?" inquired Mr. Woodward.

"Yas, sar," replied the old man. "He tole me dat he had trabbled an' seen sites, but dat he neb-

ber wus so 'stonish befo'; he did not 'spec' to see at de end ob de kunel sich a putty place, an' dat I wood hear some time what he was gwine tu say 'bout it." "That was Tom Moore, the Irish poet," said Mr. W. "De who?" interrupted Tony. "He came to this country," continued Mr. W., "to visit the Lake, as being one of the wonders of nature, and you were fortunate in having to wait on such a distinguished person."

Tom Moore, after he had arrived in this country, no doubt heard of the Lake of the Dismal Swamp, and when he reached Norfolk, Va., and the story of the fair maiden and her lover being fresh, might have induced him to visit it, and it was on that occasion that he penned the following lines :

"They made her grave ~~that~~ was too cold and damp,
For a soul so warm and true."

His poem on the "Lake of the Dismal Swamp," no doubt, is familiar with every person of ordinary information, and can be found in every library, and should be read by every person who has never done so.

CHAPTER VI.

PORTE CRAYON'S VISIT, INCIDENTS, ETC.

At a much later date, the Lake was visited by Porte Crayon, who was at that time writing for Harper's Monthly. The account given of his trip, with his illustrations, are very life-like and interesting, and in the February or March number of that valuable book, for the year 1857, you will be greatly amused at the description there given. Two darkies, Eli Chalker and Jim Pearce, were the drivers of the pleasure boat furnished by W. S. Riddick, Esq., the then agent of the Dismal Swamp Land Company, in which he was carried to the

Lake. He was there some two or three days, and his writings should be read to be appreciated. It was at the Lake that he saw uncle "Aleck," of whom a fac-simile likeness is given in the book above referred to. Uncle "Aleck" was a superannuated old colored man, belonging to the Reverend Jacob Keeling, Rector of the Episcopal Churches in Nansemond county, Virginia. He was quite old, and retained his memory to a remarkable degree. He was called the "Bee Hunter" of the Dismal Swamp, and, if I am not mistaken, had a bag of bees in his hand when Porte first met him. He would follow bees for a long distance, cutting his way through the reeds for miles in a straight line, until he came to the tree in which was the hollow. Then he would take out the bees, put them into a bag and bring them out. In going to the Lake you could see numberless paths cut by uncle Aleck for that purpose. The opening through the reeds would look to be about two feet wide and ten feet high, which was almost the length of the reeds. Uncle Aleck worked in the Swamp nearly all his life, was a faithful hand, and in his old age the company gave him a house and piece of land, as a home during his natural life. A mule was also given to him by the company, which mule I had the honor of riding at a tournament at Suffolk, Va., in 1860. How old he was no one could tell at that time. No account is given of any mules being in the Ark at the time that she settled on dry land, and where that mule came from will never be known. It is very certain that he appeared on this mundane sphere at some period after the flood. If he is dead I have heard nothing of it. He may be wandering about the Dismal Swamp. Old uncle Aleck and his mule were great curiosities, and whenever

he came to town on his mule they attracted a great deal of attention. He was an exhorter in the Methodist Churches for colored people, and always had in his pocket a Testament or Hymn book. He was perfectly conversant with the Bible, and could refer readily to any passage of Scripture that you might mention. He was born 1783 and died a few years ago, having attained the age of one hundred years, his mind being as vivid and active as at any time. We shall never forget uncle "Aleck" and his mule; they were things of our earliest recollection, and like many of the landmarks at the "Lake of the Dismal Swamp" have been washed away. I have been to it frequently since my first visit, and would notice the changes made by the rude hand of time.

I have examined several writers that have written about "Uncle Aleck's Mule," and am satisfied that it was the same one that "Nat Turner" rode when on his raid of murder in Southampton county, Va., in 1831. Looking over the diary of Colonel Godfrey, for thirty years, we notice that he said "Nat Turner," when he appeared in the avenue of Dr. Blount, on that fatal night, he rode at the head of the column, mounted on a sorrel mule, with flax mane and tail. But the question arises, how that mule got into the Dismal Swamp, and how he came in possession of the Dismal Swamp Land Company. Col. Godfrey states that there were several guns in the house of Dr. Blount, and several visitors there at the time; that the young Blount loaded the guns, and that a strong fire was kept up on the advancing column. Nat Turner was thrown from his mule, then they became panic-stricken, and were dispersed. For the bravery displayed by young Blount on that occasion, he received a mid-

shipman's warrant in the United States Navy. I will now quote from G. P. R. James' book called the "Old Dominion," in which he states that a "young mother, with her infant, fled to the Dismal Swamp for safety." It was several miles away, and it may be that she drove that same mule, and the probability is that she left the mule in the Swamp, and that he wandered about until he found Jack's Camp, where he was secured and became the property of the Dismal Swamp Land Company. How long the company worked him before he became the property of uncle Aleck I do not know, but am satisfied that it was several years, and that his wind was injured by over-loading. I have the testimony of a gentleman, well-known in Suffolk, now living, who stated that he saw a cym-ling vine at Jack's Camp which was of spontaneous growth, and which covered more Juniper trees than he could count, and from that vine there was gathered two hundred and fifty cart loads of cymplings. It may be that the hauling away of these cymplings so injured the mule that he was no longer of service to the company. There is no doubt he was turned over to uncle Aleck, which must have been during the year 1832. I was in the Swamp during that year and saw the cympling vine above alluded to, and no one could tell how it came to grow there. It will be impossible for me to tell how old uncle Aleck's mule was, or what became of him. I have never heard that he died or was killed. He was no doubt the most remarkable mule that ever lived. The last that I heard from him was related by uncle Aleck himself, and which was no doubt true. I will relate as near as I can what the old man told me. He came to Suffolk one day, and I noticed that he was very much excited. I said to him,

“Uncle Aleck, what has happened to you?” He answered, “Marse Robert, I never was in sich a fix befo’ in all my life; I have fought bears, rattlesnakes, wild cats and bees, but I tell you, sumfin has happened to me to-day dat never been known to befall any one.” “What was that uncle Aleck?” I inquired. “I’m terribly upsot, and I dunno what to do. I shall hab to move away from my place; a whirl-wind struck my well dis mornin’ and has twisted it so dat I can’t git de bucket down in de well, and I can’t git no water, an’ what is wuss dan all, my mule has been translated. He wus a good mule, and, his loss ruins me.” I saw uncle Aleck some time after that, when he told me that he was out in the Swamp hunting bees, when lo! and behold, he heard his mule bray. He cast his eyes up and saw him lodged in the forks of a large tree. There was no way by which he could get him down, and left him as he thought to die. But his surprise can be imagined when he heard nuzzling at the door one morning, when upon opening, what should he see but his mule. How he came down he could not tell, but said he should always believe that his mule could climb a tree. I said it must have been a providential interference, and that the same Power which landed him in the tree was able to lift him out. “Dat is so,” said the old man, “an’ I will nebber agin’ complain at de ways ob an over-rulin’ providence.” I often think of Col. Godfrey and his remark, when he said that what best conduces to the happiness of mankind is right. Uncle Aleck, knowing that his mule was at home with his head well in the crib, and he in the Swamp fighting bears and bees, was perfectly happy. Uncle Aleck and his mule are both now dead, and I shall always have a lively recollection of them. I often

think of them, and that I rode uncle Aleck's mule as Knight of the Dismal Swamp at a tournament, won the first honor, and was ruled out on account of my mule not making time, much to the mortification of uncle Aleck. As uncle Aleck and his mule will appear again, I will leave them for the present and relate an interesting conversation with Mr. Richard Hosier, who now lives in Suffolk, and who is as well acquainted with the Dismal Swamp as any one now living. He is perfectly familiar with every part of it, and is no doubt correct in many of his statements. He informed me that long before the Lake was discovered by Drummond, two gentlemen from Elizabeth City, N. C., left for the Dismal Swamp on a hunting expedition, and having lost their way, wandered about until they came to what they discovered to be a large body of water. From it they traveled a due west course and came out at a farm on the Desert road, known as Mossy Swamp, and one of the men was taken sick and died; the other one returned to Elizabeth City. Mr. Hosier did not state when this was, but said it was long before Drummond made known that he had discovered a lake in the Dismal Swamp. It will be remembered that Mr. Hosier was arrested in Norfolk in 1863, by order of the Federal General then commanding that Department, and was being carried toward the Indian Pole Bridge to be put to work on the defences of Norfolk. He was not disposed to do work in that way, and when well out from Norfolk he eluded the guard that had him, and directed his steps toward the Southern Branch of the Elizabeth river. On his arrival, seeing boats passing up and down, he secreted himself until the darkness of night had fallen, then making a bundle of his clothes and placing it on his head, he entered the river and

swam to the other shore. He then pursued his way to the Deep Creek Canal, which he forded, arriving at the "Feeder," he was not far from the Lake, and was at a place with which he was well acquainted, and out of the reach of all danger of being recaptured. Resting himself awhile, he then started for the Lake, and it was at that place he performed his great feat. He could not procure a boat, and the prospect before him was gloomy indeed. If he remained there he would, in all probability, have been devoured by bears and other wild animals in the Swamp, or perhaps starve. Not being in the least daunted he prepared himself to reach the western shore, which could only be done by swimming. It was seven miles across, but he nerved himself to the accomplishment of his object. He prepared himself as before by making a bundle of his clothes, which he placed on the top of his head, and was then ready to swim across or perish in the attempt. When he was about half-way across he was attacked by a large serpent, and had it not been for school of gars that was following him he would no doubt have been devoured. He reached the shore only to meet a more formidable enemy. It was a large black bear. In his scuffle with the serpent he had lost his bundle of clothes and had nothing but a large knife, which was buckled around his waist. Drawing his knife, he rushed forward and was met by the bear, when a regular hand-to-hand fight was commenced. He did not wrestle long before he found an opportunity to use his knife, and plunging it up to the hilt, he soon had the bear lying prostrate at his feet. Having lost all his clothes, it became necessary that he should do something in his nude state. The bear's skin was the only thing that he could get, so with his knife he skinned him,

and getting inside the skin he started to find some settlement. But his condition was as bad as before. The idea of his being able to get near enough to any person to tell of his condition was absurd. The very sight of him would scare every man, woman and child off the plantation. He could not get a living soul to come to him, and it was not until he had reached his own home, some few miles from Suffolk, that he could present himself as Mr. Hosier. I could write many very interesting incidents connected with the life of Mr. Hosier, which, in many instances, are thrilling. But as we are writing our own recollections, I shall only notice in a few cases what I have been told by others.

CHAPTER VII.

MANY CHANGES HAVE TAKEN PLACE.

It is pleasant to me that I can take a retrospective view of the past and note the many changes that have taken place within my recollection. Many sad changes have taken place within the past fifty years. Dynasties have arisen, lived and have had their day; they have fallen, and are known as things that were. But four of the companions of my school-boy days are living, and it is only now and then that we meet with one. The Rev. R. H. Jones, of Norfolk, is the only one that we have seen or known away from Suffolk. The honored landmarks of the town are few, and soon must be less. Benjamin Riddick, the present mayor of the town, is perhaps the oldest citizen in it—Judge P. B. Prentice, the polished gentleman—his manly form can be seen on our streets, as he, with intrepid steps, passes along; he is the oldest native citizen, and possesses a mind as active and vigorous as when young.

John Huffman, Esq., is another of the landmarks of the town ; he has lived nearly his four-score years. Whitmill Jones, Esq., is another of our old friends. His steps are feeble and trembling. The last of the old pioneers of Suffolk, whom we shall notice, is James B. Norfleet, Esq. He is perhaps more generally known than any man who has ever lived in the place. He conducted for many years a very extensive mercantile and lumber business, but fell a victim to his generous impulses. The cypresses that was known as the "apple tree," which stood in the Lake a short distance to the left of the "Lock," has been blown down, or washed up with its roots, and in a short time nothing will be seen of it. The house which stood not very far from the western shore of the Lake and occupied by a family known as Draper, has been washed away, and nothing left to show that a human habitation ever had any existence there. Before the late war a pleasure boat was kept by the company for the accommodation of parties that wished to visit the Lake, and it was customary for several parties to go in early Spring, commencing about the first of May, that being the most pleasant time and nature about to put on her coat of green. But few parties now venture in, owing to the inconvenience that attend, and when they do go they have to get in the best way they can. The pleasure boat and other boats in the canal were cut up by order of Gen. Peck, commanding the U. S. forces at Suffolk, Va., and carried to the Blackwater river to be used as pontoons across that stream. But I doubt if they were ever used for that purpose. After the surrender, so great was the demand for boats by strangers that wished

to visit the Lake of the Dismal Swamp, that Capt. Busby, an energetic citizen of Nansemond county, Virginia, had erected near the Lake a Hotel known as the Lake Drummond Hotel, and to invite visitors he had built a beautiful "Gondola," which was run daily to the Lake during the season. That old trojan, Capt. Jack Robinson, being in charge of the hotel, caused it to be well filled. It was very frequently the case that parties would come from Norfolk to go on from Suffolk, they having heard that the Gondola left her wharf every day for the Lake. I recollect a party of three young gentlemen that came from Norfolk, who wished to visit Lake Drummond. They stopped at the Exchange Hotel and made known the fact. The polite manager, Eddie S. Riddick, Esq., soon saw Capt. Busby, and his Gondola was chartered to carry the party to the Lake. Mr. R. made every preparation necessary for them; but one of the parties heard that an alligator was on exhibition near the Hotel, and thinking that it was brought from the Lake, at once provided himself with a rifle and a large quantity of fixed ammunition. All were then ready and they left for the Canal, where they would take the Gondola. She was then at her wharf, and everything being placed in, Capt. Busby took his stand at the wheel and gave orders to the first-mate to have the Gondola cast loose, which was at once obeyed, and like a swan she was gliding on in the canal at the fearful rate of about two miles an hour. To prevent any confusion if attacked, one of the most daring young men of the party, being one of the three from Norfolk, Va., placed himself in the bow of the Gondola, with rifle in hand and a box of ammunition conveniently nigh, awaited an attack from any quarter. When passing what is known as "Paradise

Old Field," one of the party cried alligator! The young man at the bow at once opened fire, and it was not until he had shot away a whole box of ammunition, that he discovered the supposed alligator to be nothing more dangerous than a floating log. Quiet having been restored the Capt. struck two bells, and the Gondola was on her way again, but unfortunately had not proceeded many miles when a snake fell in off an overhanging limb of a tree, and so near one of the young men that it caused him to jump over into the canal. The mate ordered one of the deck hands to throw the snake out, whilst others were fishing out the young man, who had jumped overboard. Capt. Busby, fearing that some other accident might happen before reaching the Hotel, thought it best that passengers should occupy their state-rooms until a landing was made at the Hotel. He said with so much confusion it would be impossible for him to land his Gondola safely. Capt. Jack, of the Hotel, was watching the movements of Capt. Busby and complimented him for his dexterity. He walked down from the Hotel and escorted the guests up, who had just arrived. The Hotel is of the Irish style of architecture, with parlor, kitchen, dining and bedroom all in the same room, the whole being heated with a hot air furnace. I have not been to the Lake for some time, but hear that great improvements have been made, and it is the object of the proprietor of the Hotel to turn the attention of Northern visitors to Florida every winter in that direction, believing that it is the healthiest place in the United States. It is very accessible, the Norfolk and Western railroad passing through its northern boundary, and the Suffolk and Carolina short line

or Grand Trunk railroad, on its Western, which by running a railroard from Kimerville, on the Grand Trunk, would bring the Lake Hotel within a few minutes ride from Suffolk, and with little or no inconvenience to invalids coming from the rigid climate of the North. I am told that all snakes remain in a torpid state during the winter and no danger might be expected from them, and as the floors of the Hotel would be kept tight no vermin could crawl through. There can be no doubt that the Lake of the Dismal Swamp must become the great centre of health seekers, and that, at an early day. Its location and advantages, the known healthliness of the place, to say nothing of its beauty and former renown, is sufficient to attract the attention of persons that seek the Sunny South from the cold and rigorous climate of the extreme northern states of the Union. It is true that some writers pronounce the warm and genial climate of the Sunny South to be a fraud, practiced to allure the unsuspecting. That cannot be so. It is universally known that the "Dismal Swamp" is the healthiest place in the known world. Where can you find a location in which a death has not occurred in a hundred years. It cannot be named.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FUTURE FOR THE DISMAL SWAMP.

The Dismal Swamp in Virginia is the only place where a death from disease has never occurred. Railroads, like hog paths, are being run in every direction, and the time is not far distant when a railroad will be run direct to the beautiful Lake of the Dismal Swamp, and Northern invalids will flock to its shores, there to bathe in its Juniper water and be healed from all disease. True, at this time it is

in a rude and wild condition, but with the Suffolk Carolina Grand Trunk R. R., stretching across its western front, civilization must tend toward it, and when a communication direct is opened, a city, Cincinnati like, will spring along its shores and its inhabitants can, by the light of the glow worm or fire fly, watch the paddling of the white canoe, so beautifully described by Moore in his poem. Another very interesting place near the swamp is a farm, which at one time belonged to General Washington. It is at the extreme south and is now owned by Mrs. John Trotman, and she has in her possession the original title deeds of every person who has owned the place at various times from Washington down to the last purchaser, who was Burrell Brothers, Esq., of Gates county, North Carolina, and an uncle of the above named lady. At his death it fell to his widow, who gave it to Mrs. John Trotman, its present owner. I have visited the place several times and the cellars can now be seen where stood the first house. It is very certain that it was settled many years ago, from the fact that I saw a tomb stone of a doctor from Waterbury, Connecticut, who died there in 1800; this stone has been seen by many persons. There is another place of some note that adjoins the Washington farm, it is known as Hamburgs. At this place a ditch or canal was dug, running east to the north-west Lock of the Dismal Swamp Canal, through which a vast quantity of grain and other produce raised by the farmers of Gates county, was shipped to Norfolk. An extensive mercantile business was carried on at Hamburg by Col. T. W. Smith, so well known, who afterwards removed to and now resides in Suffolk, Va. It was at Ham-

burg that so many refugees ran the blockade during the late war from Norfolk and other places, and a number of incidents could be related of persons that sought that place to get in and out of the Confederate lines. Hamburg is a beautiful place and is owned by Mrs. S. C. Voight, who resides upon the premises. It was at this place that Beast Butler, of the Federal Army, carried on a very extensive barter trade with the Rebs. It adjoins the Washington farm, as I said before, and may have been at one time a part of it. I know nothing of the first settlement of the place. It has the appearance of being very ancient—no doubt dates back many years before the revolution. Or it may have been the headquarters of a roving tribe of Indians, as many arrow points and tomahawks have been ploughed up on the place. To my friend T. H. Lassiter, Esq., of Gates county, North Carolina, I am indebted for much of the information gained of that locality, and I could relate a good deal told to me by that gentleman, which might be very interesting. Mr. Lassiter lives at a beautiful farm, on the main Edenton road, near the Silver Spring, a place of great resort for persons living in that part of the county.

I will relate a very interesting conversation which I had with a very old colored man that I met in the road near the Orapeake Mill, in Gates county, North Carolina, when on my way to Suffolk, Va., and not far from the beautiful village of Jonesville, lying on both sides of the Suffolk and Carolina Short Line or Grand Trunk Railroad. I said to the old man, "uncle where do you live?" "Boss you ax me a hard question," replied the old man. "Git off your hoss an sot down, I'm gwine tell you sumfin. Do you smoke de pipe boss." I replied

that I did and handed him my bag of tobacco. He took from his pocket what I supposed he called a pipe, it was the butt end of a corn cob, hollowed out with something protruding at a right angle, which he called a stem; what it really was, I could not tell. He filled it with tobacco. I then handed him a match, when thanking me very kindly he lighted his pipe, drawing it a few times to see that it was well lighted, said "Boss I will now tol you sumthin dat happen many years ago. Do you see dat mill pon' yonder?" alluding to the Orapeake, I replied that I did. "Well boss, dat pon' was de cause of my trouble. One dark nite I was in dar strikin at fish, I had jist hit a large chub, when a white man, who was in dar strikin, cum up and sed, boy dat is my fish. I tole him dat I kilt de fish an dat it was mine; 'bout dat time he was gwine to take de fish an den I took up my hatchet dat I had in de bote, whar I split liteard wid and hit him on de head, he drapped down in de bote and I seed dat I had done somefin bad; de man was dead and I wood be hung if dey cotched me, so I drug de man ober de side of de bote into de water an mashed him down in de mud, an dat man never cum up any more. I didn't go home any more; an arter a while de white man was missin, and de peple gin to talk, an I gin to git skared. Do you see dat house up dar?" I said I did. "Well, Marse Luke Summer libbed dar, de big house dat he libbed in is done torn down and de small one made outen it." He is done ded now, and when he libbed dar is mor'n a hundred year ago. His gran-son, Marse Joe Riddick, now own de place, an libs at it. He mus be ni eighty year old. Well dey fine de white man was done missin, an it bin dat I was strikin fish in de Mill pon' de same nite, dey 'gin to

look for me, an my daddy tole me dat I had better go into de desart, which was de Dismal Swamp. I took his 'vice, an lef; de runaway ketchers cum in dar to look for me, but didn't get me. I staid dar till de war was ober. I cum out and hab been look 'bout dis place to see if I node anybody, but dey all gone ded, an nobody nose me. I tell you boss, when you git in de desert ef no body ses nuffin, de runaway ketchers can't kotch you. I am berry ole now, an my home folks are all ded an gone an I no nobody. De ghost ob de white man dat I kilt hants me all de time, whar ebber I go, and I is a misable man. I am now on my way to de desart to hide myself and die." I asked him who he belonged to at the time he committed the murder. Replying he said; "I longed to Capt. Richard Brothers, in de desart." "Well," I said, "did he ever know what became of you?" "I nebber heard any more from him arter I got in de desart. I heard dat he dide in 1817 ob de cole plague, or black tongue. "You are correct in what you have said, uncle," I replied. "I do not wish to interview you any longer on that subject. He was my grand-father and lived at the place mentioned by you. I hear the old people speak of the circumstances; you were his carriage driver, at the time, and your name is "Long Davy." "Yas sar, dat is my name, but don't tell any body 'bout it. I had a brudder libing in de low parrish of Nansemond county, but he is ded. His name was George." I said, "uncle Davy, you are correct." On one occasion being at Driver's Store, in Lower Parrish, of Nansemond, I saw a tall and very polite colored man drive up. I was struck with his appearance, and asking him his name, he said George W. Costew, sir." "Then you are from Sunsbury, Gates

county, North Carolina." "I was from that place; he replied, "but have been living in the Lower Parish since the breaking out of the war." "Were you a slave or free-born?" I inquired. "I was a slave," he responded. "Who was your first owner that you recollect." "Capt. Richard Brothers, on the desert road, Nansemond county, Va., who died with the cold plague, in 1817," he readily answered. He appeared to be very much pleased, when I told him that his first master was my grandfather. He looked at me very straight and asked me my mother's name, and upon my answering Margaret, he said that he thought he could see a family likeness, and that my mother was the first mistress he ever had, she "drawing" him in the division of my grand-father's property. I left him at Driver's Store and never saw him again. I have since heard that he was dead. I often thought of the circumstance of the meeting. Such frequently occurs and bring up recollections that are buried in oblivion. The corroborative testimony of George satisfied me that "Davy" was true in what he related to me about what happened at Orapeake Mill Pond, in Gates county, North Carolina, near the beautiful village of Jonesville, on the Grand Trunk Railroad.

CHAPTER IX.

SUFFOLK AND EARLY DAYS.

I will take the above railroad and return to Suffolk, when I will say something of my early recollections of that place. It was in the year 1830, that my father, with his family, moved to it. I was quite small at that time, but I recollect the time well. Suffolk was then a small village, situated on the Nansemond river, with a population of about

five hundred, and increased very slowly in population until after the surrender, which was in April, 1865. Since that it has increased very rapidly in population and growth. It was in Suffolk that Henry Harman commenced his business career; moved to Norfolk in 1832, and became one of her successful merchants. At his death, his remains were brought to Suffolk, and now quietly rest in Cedar Hill Cemetery. I could mention many instances of successful business men of that town, were it necessary. I will now write of things of more recent date; something within the recollection of many persons yet living. It will be recollected that a fire broke out in June, 1837, that destroyed the lower part of the town. There were no engines in the place and the flames raged with great fury; the Allen residence, at Rose Hill, about one half mile distant, was set on fire several times, by the flying debris, and it was with difficulty that the house was saved. It was at Rose Hill that a large mercantile business was carried on, and no doubt a large quantity of Juniper lumber was shipped, from that point, belonging to private individuals. A wharf was built at the mouth of Shingle Creek, I imagine long before the Jericho Canal was dug, and large quantities of lumber was hauled to it by persons living on the edge of the Dismal Swamp. We will mention one person that we knew who owned a large Juniper Glade. I know of one who owned a large tract of Juniper, and he no doubt shipped from Allen's wharf. His name was Thomas Swepston and lived not far from Suffolk, on the line of the Seaboard Railroad, which divides his farm. He was agent of the Dismal Swamp Land Company for several years, and may have been the first, after the Jericho Canal was opened. The

last agent, of whom I have any knowledge, was W. S. Riddick, Esq., who died several years ago. The last Inspector of lumber was J. E. Bonnewell, of whom it is my pleasure to notice particularly. Perhaps no man was more generally known and respected in Suffolk than he. He was a true friend, benevolent and kind, never refusing to bestow charity when called upon. He succeeded Mr. Joseph Hill, as Inspector for the Company, which office he held until his death. It was during his term of office that it was made so pleasant to visit the Lake; by giving timely notice, he would always give the parties the best boats and the most trusty hands as drivers, and would always be present when the boat left its landing and when it returned, and was anxious to know if any mishaps had occurred to any of the party. And if it should be reported that some lady had fallen into the Canal he would always very politely ask that she be carried into his house to be made more comfortable. Capt. Babel Jones, of Philadelphia, was his bosom friend. When the Capt. was in Suffolk, they could always be found together. They both have passed away, and a generous people will do justice to their memory. Capt. Bonnewell died leaving a rich heritage behind; a name that will live as long as it is called. But few have lived and died who was so much beloved and respected as he. He was proud, but not haughty, and flexible to kind impulses. He was the soul of honor, and no one can say that he even failed to accord to every one their just dues. I knew him from my boyhood up and never knew a better man. He left an interesting family—Mrs. H. R. Culley, being his eldest daughter. I could write many noble traits in the character of that good man, but it is not necessary. There are but

few of his compeers now living, and soon they will all have passed away. Such is the march of time.

Nothing very important transpired in Suffolk from 1837, until after the close of the late war, when she awoke from her slumbering condition.—her watch-word being progress. She brushed the dust from her eyes, and her advancement in every branch of industry can be seen in her rapid growth. She stands second to no town in a commerical point of view. Her manufacturing interests are considerable, and being a railroad centre, she must prosper and grow. The disastrous fire, which occurred June 7th, 1885, impeded business for a few months. But our men of capital at once commenced to repair the breach, and she is again on the road to fame and wealth. And it is to the Suffolk and Carolina or Short Line Railroad, that Suffolk is mostly indebted for her present prosperous condition. Penetrating as it does, a country that is rich and fertile, she has already felt its influence and it should be fostered as one of the main arteries to her prosperity.

CHAPTER X.

ENTERPRISE AND PROSPERITY.

This railroad was projected by the energetic and far seeing W. H. Gay, Esq., of Suffolk, as a lumber road, who pushed it rapidly as far south as Sunbury, in Gates county, N. C. He soon saw that it was a grand enterprise, and associated with him several gentlemen of the city of Baltimore, in its construction, who afterwards bought out Mr. Gay's interest, and have constructed a road that will soon become one of the leading lines, connecting as it does, by a line of steamboats, the waters, of Albermarle Sound and the Atlantic Ocean, and

bringing eastern North Carolina in direct communication with the city of Baltimore. Under the able management of Mr. H. B. Hubbell, the efficient vice-President of the company, and R. H. Thompson, Esq., as general manager, with the assistance of Col. Harry McCleary, the road has been brought to its present flourishing condition, and the Gay manufacturing company, under President Camp, is one of its chief adjuncts. This road now connects with the Norfolk and Western, and the Atlantic and Danville railways, and soon large quantities of freight will be transferred from it to the above named roads.

Suffolk is more particularly noted for her schools, colleges, and other institutions of learning, all of which are in a very prosperous condition. The Suffolk Military Academy, under the direction of Joseph King, principal, with its professorship, is no doubt the best school for young men in tide-water Virginia. The character and standing of it, with its location for health, is a recommendation that must tend greatly to its success. Another school of high grade is the Suffolk Collegiate Institute, under the professorship of P. J. Kernodle, is an institution that has been established for several years, and has received a liberal support from its friends. The course at this institution is thorough; young ladies are taught the higher branches and are instructed in music, drawing and painting. The west end Female Seminary, under the direct supervision of Col. W. H. Darden, formerly of Isle of Wight county, Va., with Miss Novella Darden, as principal, with the assistance of Miss Lizzie J. King, gives to the school a reputation that must add greatly to its success. Young ladies at this school are instructed in all the higher branches,

music, painting and drawing. It is eligibly located on College Avenue. The Suffolk Female Institute, under the direction of the Missess Finney is two well known to require a notice. It is the oldest established school in Suffolk, and enjoys a reputation that is enviable. It has probably received more favor than any other school of which I have notice. The Nansemond Seminary, of which Mrs. Quimby is principal, is a school that recommends itself. It is limited in its scholarships, and has gained quite a reputation.

CHAPTER XI.

OLD BENN'S CHURCH—SUFFOLK'S FIRST RAILROAD, ETC.

It is interesting to read of relics of the olden times and bring up associations connected therewith. I will now notice an antiquated old building, in Isle of Wight county, Va., on the main road leading from Suffolk to Smithfield, and about five miles from the latter place. It is called Old Benn's Church. At what time it was built, I have never heard, but it must have been soon after the settlement of this country. The rude hand of time has reduced it to bare walls and nothing is left of its interior to show that it was ever a place of worship. That it was built when this country was a colony there can be no question. There is a burying ground at the place, on which can be seen tomb stones of very ancient date, and, if I mistake not, the first rector of the church or some of his family, was buried at it; a tablet could be seen set in the building of the fact. Bishop Meade, in his history of the Episcopal Churches in Virginia, mentions Benn's Church as being one of, if not the oldest, church in the state. It has been snatched from

further decay by some benevolent ladies and will soon again become a place of worship. Let the names of these ladies form the future history of that sacred old church, and let future generations know that it was at one time from decay reduced to bare walls, and that by the humane efforts of some ladies it has been reclaimed and once more presents the appearance of a house of worship, standing as a monument to its former renown and greatness. There are several Episcopal churches in this county, that should not be allowed to go to decay. They stand as landmarks in Virginia; built long before the recollection of any one now living. I know of several places in this county, that I have been told were Glebe property, and at one time were and had erected on them Episcopal churches. In many places these churches have gone down, the land escheated, and are now occupied by churches of other denominations. And it may have been so, as they are just such places as old Episcopal churches now stand on elevated sites, near running streams. I could state some very interesting facts connected with many places in this county, which might appear very meritorious, nevertheless, they are true, and form a part of the history of the county.

I will now mention Mount Pleasant, the home of the Meades, of Virginia. This was at one time a very beautiful estate, on the west bank of what is now known as Smith's Creek, and is the Southern Branch, of the Nansemond River; long before the revolution this place was settled, and at the time very large vessels could navigate the creek as far as Mount Pleasant; it then being a wide and deep river, and I have been told that a direct oreign trade was carried on with that place. A

grave-yard can be seen at Mount Pleasant which is very singular and has some curiously inscribed tomb stones in it, of persons who died there many years ago. By the ruthless hand of time many of the tombs were mutilated and it may be that little is left of them. I had the inscriptions of some of them, but gave them to a gentleman from Westmoreland county, Virginia. He wanted them on account of their singularity, and he being an antiquarian he said they would be quite an acquisition to his cabinet of curiosities. It is highly probable that Mount Pleasant was settled long before the Dismal Swamp was known or heard of, and I doubt if any one thought that there could be found such a place as it really was existed, and having hid in its dark foliage such a beautiful place as Lake Drummond.

The first great enterprise that was commenced in Suffolk, after the surrender, was the building of the railroad of the Suffolk Lumber Company, which runs from Suffolk to Asher, in Gates county, North Carolina, where is the home of the Hon. C. A. Whaley. As soon as the road was completed as far as Whaleyville, in Nansemond county, Va., a town soon sprung up, and a mercantile business was commenced, which for a time paralyzed business in Suffolk. It stopped the channel through which flowed the life-blood of the town from where it started. This road is owned by Elilew Jackson, (Governor-elect of Maryland) & Co., and brothers, and has from its commencement done a heavy business. It has been ably managed by W. Whaley, Esq., and Mr. Cannon. Whether it has been of any great good to Suffolk, is a question that we are not prepared to answer, though the landholders through which it has passed have

been benefitted; it brought their pine timber into market, which otherwise would have remained a primeval forest and a dead expense to its owners. The sale of it to Jackson & Co., has cleared many of debt, and to that extent the road has been a benefit. The company has bought large landed possessions in Alabama and Georgia, and will soon move their field of operations to those points. The quantity of wood and timber that has been transported over the road, is incredible. To say the least of Jackson and Brothers, they started a spirit of enterprise, which to some extent, has been a benefit. New ideas have been infused into the minds of our people, and instead of keeping their capital locked up they have invested it in various directions for the improvement and benefit of trade, thereby causing to spring up factories and machine shops, to say nothing of the many other advantages that are derived through patriotic motives.

CHAPTER XII.

BEAR HUNTING SOUTHAMPTON REMINISCENCES, ETC.

It is customary in the fall season to have what is called bear hunts in the Dismal Swamp, and parties are frequently made up to go on such hunts; before going it is necessary that some preparation should be made. Bear hunting is very dangerous, and is sometimes attended with difficulty. Before starting you should provide yourself with a cowboy suit, a good rifle, a pair of revolvers, a bowie knife—16 inch blade, and sub-marine armor. When thus equipped, you can enter the Swamp. You proceed cautiously along listening to hear the bears lapping, when you go in the direction of the sound. Bears move very cautiously, and you should be

sure to keep a good lookout in your rear, as it sometimes happens that when you are going forward a drove of them are following you, and when least expected they make the attack, and if the parties should be the least separated it often happens that all perish. I was told of a party that were out on a bear hunt in the Dismal Swamp, who supposed that they could face anything. The party consisted of eight good men; they had not proceeded very far in the Swamp, when they heard in the distance the lapping of bears; of course it was very exciting, and if one has any courage he is apt to show it at the time; a halt was made and the question asked what should be done? They were not thinking of the danger that was surrounding them; they did not think that bears were on their path. But it was too late. Whilst discussing what to do they were sprung upon from the rear and six were badly lacerated, one rode off on the back of a bear and the last one retreated to the Lake for safety. Should you at any time go to the Dismal Swamp to hunt bears, be exceedingly careful to have your rear well guarded.

Researches among old papers often bring to light subjects that long have been forgotten and which if cultivated tends in many ways to the benefit of the rising generation. We often hear of events that have long since transpired which at the time we pass un-noticed; but somehow or other an impression is made and sooner or later something transpires that brings to our recollection a circumstance which refreshes our memory of some important event of which we have a slight remembrance. Looking over the fourteenth volume of Col. Godfrey's work entitled Important Discoveries, to see if we could find anything therein written by

which we could identify "Uncle Aleck's Mule" and if possible to define him that there could be no reasonable doubt but that it was the same mule rode by Nat Turner and that he was driven by the young mother in her flight with her infant to the Dismal Swamp, and if what G. P. R. James said in his *Old Dominion* be true, we must believe that Uncle Aleck and Nat Turner rode the same mule. No other account was ever given that ever came to our knowledge. But it will make no difference as everybody knew that Uncle Aleck had a mule; but as we have stated before looking over the fourteenth volume of Col. Godfrey's work on "Important Discoveries;" many years ago we read in it an account of his first visit to the county of Southampton, Virginia, and the many important discoveries therein made. His visit to that county was on very important business, and being a man of great observation he was careful and cautious. He was tracing some titles, and it was necessary that he should make many inquiries. The country was wild and but sparsely settled, at that time, and it was extremely difficult for one to get accommodation for man and horse. He was fearful at times that he would not be able to reach a shelter for the night. He had crossed at the South Quay Ferry, at an early hour, and had been in the saddle all day and was very much fatigued and exhausted, besides he had ate nothing. Night was fast approaching and he in a strange country. He reined up his horse, which caused him to increase his gait. He had not ridden many miles further when he thought that he heard a cock crow; he listened and soon he heard the sound repeated. He was then satisfied that he was near some human habitation. What must have been his feelings, when he knew that he would soon

reach a place where he probably would be able to stay for the night, to rest and refresh himself. He rode on and in a short time came in sight of a very neat and comfortable looking house, not many rods from the road. He arrived in front of it and found that everything about the house had the appearance of neatness and comfort, and that he would probably be accommodated for the night. So he dismounted from his horse and opened the gate and proceeded to the house. The proprietor must have been very fond of fox hunting, from the number of hounds that made an attack on him as he rode up the avenue, and which was so sudden that it brought out the entire household. It was getting dark, but sufficiently light to see one approaching on horse back. The dogs were called off, and he heard a voice exclaim ride up. A very handsome picket fence surrounded the house and upon arriving at the gate he was met by a fine looking old English gentleman, who invited him to dismount and have his horse stabled. Thanking him for his kindness, he at once dismounted and taking the extended hand of the old gentleman and said, sir, I am a benighted traveller and a stranger in this section, and have sought your kindness for shelter for the night. You are heartily welcome, said the old gentleman; strangers, if gentlemen, are always welcome visitors to my house; so without any further ceremony walk in and rest yourself, for I imagine that you have been in your saddle for several hours and must feel quite fatigued. I have been riding since early morning and was surprised to find the country so thinly settled; this is the first place that I have seen at which I could venture to stop. Very true, he replied, but you will, as you advance, find the country more thickly settled. We

walked into the house and were met in the hall by a very fine looking and matronly old lady. Giving his name as Godfrey, the old gentleman grasped his hand and said Col. Godfrey this is indeed let me introduce you to my wife, Mrs. Ridley. Ridley did you say? The same, this is indeed most fortunate. Say no more Col. Godfrey, walk into the sitting room, you will find a cheerful fire and as the air is a little chilly, a seat by the fire will cause you to feel more comfortable. Make yourself perfectly at home, you will excuse me for a short time while I give some directions to my head man, when I will rejoin you. You are very excusable, Col. Ridley, replied Col. Godfrey, I do not wish you to let my appearance interfere in the least with your business arrangements. The Colonel was not long away, and on re-entering the room remarked to Col. Godfrey, this unexpected meeting is very mysterious to me, and the more so because my wife remarked but a very short time ago that some stranger was coming, that she knew it from the incessant crowing of the chickens, and the fierce howl of the hounds; I shall always hereafter believe in such signs. But Colonel, our supper is quite ready; you will be shown to a room where you may arrange your toilet. Having performed this duty, he was met in the hall by Col. Ridley, who said, Colonel it has been the custom at my house since my earliest manhood, just before eating to take a toddy, made of the juice of the Cider Berry, which is prepared in this county, and is the only medicine used in my family. The farmers of this county have a peculiar way of preparing it, and everybody that has used it speak of the good qualities, which it possesses. Some say that its use, when you feel badly, will cause you to feel

good; and to use when you feel good will make you feel bad. It always makes me feel good; and I am remarkably fond of it. The oftener you take this medicine the better you will like it. There is sugar and honey, a little of either added, will make it much more palatable, as honey is soothing and acts well for the lungs; I will try the honey. This being disposed of, they proceeded to supper, Col. Ridley led the way to the supper room, and on entering found the family all standing waiting. They were soon seated and on the table before them was placed a good old fashioned Virginia supper. Addressing himself to Mrs. Ridley, Col. Godfrey said: Madame, I fear that you have on this occasion put yourself to some unnecessary trouble on my account. Not in the least, graciously responded that lady. Then turning to Col. Ridley; Col. Godfrey said, you were quite right Colonel when you said that the juice would make one feel good, it has had that effect on me already and I feel that I can do ample justice to this fine supper. I am glad you think so, returned Col. R.; nothing pleases me more than to see my visitors eat heartily, help yourself, it does appear to me that one who has been riding all day would not require any artificial means of inducing an appetite. Colonel, said Mrs. Ridley, I suppose this is your first visit to the county? No madame, replied Col. Godfrey, I passed through a portion of it several years ago to locate some lands on the Nottoway river, and as there appears to be some dispute about the titles, I am on my way to look after it. Yes she said, I heard you were coming and am truly glad you made it convenient to come this way, and besides you are on the direct road; do you apprehend any trouble? Not the least; my papers are authenticated, and I have only

to present them. I hope, she said, that you will find it as you have stated. Supper being over, they all repaired to the sitting room. Col. Ridley had a daughter whose husband, a colonel of infantry, had been killed in the war of the revolution, and large grants of land had been made by the Government to his heirs. What was the name of the soldier? enquired Col. Godfrey. Col. G. Bradley, answered Col. R. Bradley? Yes sir, that was his name. That is a part of the business which caused my visit in this direction, and Mrs. Bradley need have no fears as to the validity of her title. I have the papers with me that will place her in full possession of the estate. Besides she is entitled to a large amount from the Government, as half pay for her husbands services during the revolution, which she will receive on application through the proper channel. It was now getting quite late and Col. G. was told that his room was ready, if he wished to retire. Feeling a little sleepy, after having eaten a hearty supper and as he had to make an early start in the morning, he thought it best to go to his room, so bidding the family good night he followed a boy, who carried a lighted candle, to the room to which he had been assigned for the night, in which a cheerful fire was burning; the boy entered the room closing the door behind him and said: Mass boss, mammy tole me to ax you ef you war any kin to de man dat made de baby medicin? Who is your mammy? enquired the now thoroughly interested Colonel. She's de oman dat nusses all de babys on de plantation. Tell your mammy that I will see her in the morning; yas sar, he said, and left the room. The Colonel soon retired as he felt somewhat jaded. He awoke at an early hour and having some moments

leisure got up and dressed himself, about this time he heard a tapping at his door and at the same time the voice of the boy exclaiming, ise got a pitcher of fresh water for you. Bring it in, said the Colonel. The boy entered showing two rows of white ivory. Boss will you hab a fire made? No said the Colonel, I will soon be ready to go down; is the Colonel up? Yas sar, an is waitin for you. Then I will go down, said the Colonel, which he did and was met at the foot of the stairs by Col. Ridley, who bade a cheerful good morning and expressed the hope that he felt much better after his nights rest. Thank you sir, I am glad to say that I feel very much refreshed. If you feel disposed, said Col. R., we will take a walk out, the air is bracing and a little walk will give you an appetite for your breakfast, which will soon be ready. They started, and as the old nurse of the plantation wished to see Col. G., he proposed to his host that they should go to her quarters. They had but a short distance to go, as her house was very conveniently situated. When they arrived they found they old lady with a baby in her lap evidently for some purpose. Good morning aunty, said Col. G.; the old woman looked very much excited; she wore a pair of spectacles, the lenses of which looked like two saucers. Mornin' sir, she replied. What are you going to do with your baby, enquired the Colonel. I'm gwine to feed it sir; its mammy is ded, an I hab to feed it myself. What do you give it to eat? I char tater, spit it out on my finger an wipe cross de chile's mouf, arter dat I make a sugar rag, put some sweet flag in it, put de rag in de chile's mouf and lay it down; it goes to sleep, an wen it wakes up ef it cries I git it some more tater. But queried the Colonel, suppose it is sick?

I can always tell dat; ef it draws up its legs and kicks, I no dat sumthin is de matter, an I den gib it some cider berry juice, wid nut meg grated ober it. an in no time de baby cries for mo of de juice. Sum folks gib dar babys' Godfrey's Gargle, but I dus not blebe in doctors fisic; nine times out ob ten dey will kill de baby. I thort dat you war sum kin to Mr. Godfrey, dat made de medcin, and wood ax you 'bout it. No aunty I am no kin to him.

Being informed that breakfast was ready Col. R. proposed that they should return to the house, and that a little of the cider berry juice would add much to the enjoyment of the meal; and as every thing was convient proposed that they should indulge. Col. G. took some of the juice with honey as before and was then ready for breakfast. Col. R. led the way and on entering found a hot smoking breakfast. Mrs. R. remarked: Colonel, you are an early riser I see; I fear that you did not rest well last night. I assure you mamdame, the Colonel gallantly replied, I could not have been made more comfortable. My business being urgent it was necessary that I should rise early. You do not think of leaving this early? Yes madame, you know that delays are dangerous I have spent a very pleasant time and hope not long hence to make a more extended visit. I was very much amused this morning at seeing the nurse of the plantation feeding a baby. It was quite a novel sight to me. The old woman does not appear to have much confidence in doctors. No sir, replied the lady, we have been living here a long time; and no doctor has ever been called, professionally, to see any one at the place. The old woman with her tater, sweet flag, sugar rags, cider berry juice and Black Jack, keeps every one in a healthy condition. She must

be very valuable to you said the Colonel. Yes sir, said Mrs. R. we could not do without her, and her loss could not be replaced. It is getting late and I am admonished I must leave said the Colonel, for I have some distance yet to ride. He said it would be a great pleasure for him to remain longer under the hospitable roof of his kind host and hostess, but that it would not be possible for him to do so. He said further that he had some papers which he would hand over to Col. Ridley which would be of great service to his daughter, Mrs. Bradley, as they would secure her right to certain disputed property, and that he must bid them *adieu*. Then addressing himself to Col. R., said: These papers are valuable, take them and entrust them only into the hands of Mrs. Bradley, and that if he would now order his horse he would proceed on his way. Col. R. assured him that he would like to have him stay longer, but that of course he best knew his business; that it had been his custom to welcome all visiting and speed all departing guests. That should he happen to come that way again he would be delighted to have him stop, as he would always find a hearty welcome. Col. Godfrey thanked his new friend and said that should it be his fortune again to visit that neighborhood he promised not to pass him by. His horse was waiting, so giving the Colonel a hearty shake of the hand and bidding good-bye to all, he mounted and rode away.

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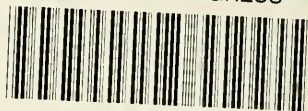
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